

SIDNEY AND
BEATRICE WEBB

him, none of the varieties of what he has called "Impossibilism" had any attraction whatsoever. The lecture which he gave to the Society in 1894 on *Socialism, True and False** expresses, the more compellingly that its tone is, throughout, so gentle, the iron hand so completely sheathed in the velvet glove, what he thought, from the first

"In 1884, the Fabian Society, like the other Socialist organisations, had its enthusiastic young members—aye, and old ones, too—who placed all their hopes on a sudden tumultuous uprising of the united proletariat, before whose mighty onrush kings, landlords, and capitalists would go down like ninepins, leaving society quietly to re-sort itself into Utopia. The date for the Social Revolution was sometimes actually fixed for 1889, the centenary of the opening of the French Revolution. I remember myself that one of our friends, in his zeal that the rural districts might not be forgotten, printed and circulated a proposal that a few Socialist missionaries should buy a gipsy caravan and live in it 'until the Revolution/ an event evidently to be expected before the ensuing winter!'

It was against all thinking and teaching of this catastrophic kind that the Society gradually came to set its lace—not, as I believe, that we were any less earnest in our waifaic against existing evils, 01 less extreme in our remedies, but because we were sadly and soirowfully convinced that no sudden or simultaneous transformation of society from an Individualist to a Collectivist basis was possible, or even thinkable

On the other hand, we had but little sympathy with schemes for the regeneration of mankind by the establishment of local Utopias, whether in Cumberland or in Chile To turn out back on the Unearned Increment and the Maehmc Industriy a poor way of conquering them We had no faith in the n c upera-

tive qualities of spade husbandry or any devices
for dodging the
Law of Rent In short, we repudiated the common
assumption
that Socialism was necessarily bound up with
Insurrectionism
on the one hand or Utopianism on the other, and
we set to work
to discover for ourselves and to teach to others
how practically to
transform England into a Social Democratic
commonwealth "

In this highly characteristic passage, the
keywords are
the *practically* in the closing line and the
refusal to attempt

¹ Reprinted in *Problems of Industry*